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ABSTRACT

Presenting a base of general information that local business people and government officials involved with downtown revitalization should be familiar with in order to understand the range of options available and factors that will influence the outcomes of any revitalization program, the paper summarizes current theories, trends, studies, and development practices pertaining to downtown revitalization in small towns. Section one describes basic elements/concepts of five organizations/authors: recommendations for organization, design, downtown promotion and economic restructure by the National Main Street Center-National Trust for Historic Preservation; emphasis on physical revitalization, traffic, parking, public transit, restoration of residential areas, and economic revitalization by Private Revitalization of Downtown, Inc.; stress on cooperative thinking, full awareness, task-oriented organization, and independent action by Craig Aronoff; strategies involving concern, optimism, confidence, leadership, knowledge, plans, public partners, and the ability to make deals by Irwin Davis; and recognition of the importance of public policy by Robert Craycroft. Section two summarizes critical concepts treated in small town development literature: organization; design; traffic, parking, and safety; land use; economic structure; merchandising and promotion; and public policy. The final section focuses on unique characteristics associated with downtown revitalization in small towns and establishes the basis for an alternative approach. (NEC)

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hard times
COMMUNITIES IN TRANSITION

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Revitalizing the small town mainstreet

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Many small towns in the western United States face the persistent problem of physical, economic, and social decline in their main street, or downtown areas. Even in communities where there is growth and development, as in many small towns, there is also decay, and a decline of activity in the central business district.

Small towns with a population of 2,500 to 20,000 are historically an important economic component of American societies and their importance continues today. In the United States, only about 2,000 cities have a population exceeding 10,000 inhabitants, but there are more than 15,000 municipalities of less than 10,000 people (Williams, 1977 p.9). The problems of many small town mainstreets, such as deteriorating buildings and facilities, poor business conditions, visual blight, apathetic attitudes, and absence of agressive business management practices, are real and important. These problems must be remedied if a healthy economic and social environment is to be maintained in the "heart" of heartland America.

This paper will treat current theories, trends, studies, and development practices pertaining to downtown revitalization in small towns, and is intended for use by local business people and by government officials interested in increasing their awareness of small-town downtown revitalization. The information presented here is general in nature and does not provide specific recommendations. Rather, it presents a base of information that people who are involved with downtown revitalization in small towns should be familiar with in order to understand the range of options available and the factors that will influence the outcome of any downtown revitalization program.

The paper is divided into three main sections. The first section describes the work of organizations and authors who have presented a relatively comprehensive program of downtown revitalization, along with the elements and concepts they feel are critical to program success. Each of these programs is described, and the major thrust, area of emphasis, or significant elements briefly noted. The second section summarizes the relevant literature and organizes it according to various program components. The third section focuses on the unique characteristics associated with downtown revitalization in small towns, and establishes the basis for an alternative approach.

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The five organizations or authors whose work is discussed in this section have all developed fairly comprehensive programs which will be considered in the following order: The National Main Street Center -National Trust for Historic Preservation (NMSC); Private Revitalization of Downtown, Inc. (PROD, Inc.); Craig Aronoff; Irwin Davis; Robert Craycroft.

NMSC is the most active group in the U.S. in publication and participation in downtown revitalization programs, particularly for small towns. They have published several books and other materials, including audio-visual presentations, that are directly applicable to small town downtown revitalization. The National Main Street Center Training Manual describes the NMSC preservation-based approach.

The NMSC (1982, p. 35) recommends an approach and provides assistance that concentrates on four primary concepts: organization, design, promotion, and economic restructure.

Organization. Bankers, city government, merchants, chambers of commerce, or local preservation groups can work together more effectively in the downtown as organized groups than as separate entities.

Design. The visual quality of buildings, signs, window displays and public areas are considered a crucial element of revitalization.

Downtown promotion. Recommendations for promoting and advertising the downtown as a shopping center which offers many services and kinds of merchandise are part of the NMSC assistance.

Economic restructure. Communities can diversify the downtown economy and fill gaps by recruiting new stores to balance the retail mix; by converting unused upper floors into housing and offices; or by improving management skills through seminars and workshops.

The NMSC program is perhaps the most comprehensive and valuable resource for those interested in downtown revitalization in smaller communities. There is an emphasis on historic preservation, which is clearly understandable, given the roots of the organization. In fact, for many communities, a valid, if not critical aspect of their program would be to embrace this principle and build upon the heritage and intrinsic character displayed in the downtown area.

PROD, Inc. has documented an approach based on experiences with downtown revitalization in Santa Cruz, California. The PROD, Inc. approach relies on private initiative to generate long term physical, economic, and social rejuvenation. PROD, Inc. (1975 p. 30) notes: "Through carefully planned physical rejuvenation, economic benefits should occur and these two go hand in hand to generate the third, the social benefits of a viable downtown area." Major components of the PROD, Inc. program include:

Physical revitalization. Beautification and restoration create a milieu that shoppers find exciting. PROD, Inc. recommends sign ordinances, remodeled facades, a design review board, updated merchandising techniques, waste receptacles, and restoration of old structures.

Traffic, parking, and public transit. PROD, Inc. suggests that circulation can be altered, or at least improved. Through traffic can be re-routed to bypass the Central Business District (CBD) and parking should be added behind shops.

Restoration of residential areas. Residences that are in or near the CBD should be restored, if feasible. PROD, Inc. maintains that if the CBD is flourishing and beautiful, there is every reason to live near it, and some residences could be converted to office space. They recommend a plan for complete coordination of improvements in the CBD and surrounding area.

Economic revitalization. When good design is utilized, investment in the physical appearance of the downtown structures can be a significant attraction. Downtown should be more than a place to buy goods and services; it should serve as the focal point of the community, and promotional activities such as sidewalk sales, art shows, and fairs will help to achieve this by providing social as well as commercial activity. The social activity becomes part of a circular process, contributing to the economy.

Craig Aronoff, in his 1979 study, *Model Program to Assist Small and Midsized Communities with Downtown Development,* presents a series of recommendations which he feels are key aspects of a successful program. He stresses organization and management as the foundation of a revitalization program. Specific recommendations include:

Cooperative thinking. A central focus is necessary, and it is important that merchants and community leaders work closely with their neighbors, even though they may be business competitors.

Full awareness. It is foolish to spend money on aesthetic and physical improvements without considering the problems associated with management, advertising, marketing, and public relations.

Task oriented organizations. A merchants association, or an advisory commission must be organized to deal with specific problems and to influence elected officials, business people, and individual citizens.

Independent action. Local merchants should not depend on government to solve their problems. Aronoff notes that the essence of the problems that plague downtown are competitive in nature and thus primarily within the realm of private enterprise.

Once merchants have taken the initiative and organized themselves, they must break the problem into component parts and establish task forces to deal with each area. Members of the political, professional and general communities must be involved to achieve structured and continuous input from a broad based population and consensus developed before major changes in the status quo are initiated.

Irwin Davis indentifies strategies in *Seven Requirements Determine the Success of Downtown Revitalizationm Projects* (1980) which he feels will yield success in a downtown program for large and small communities. Like Aronoff (1979), Davis (1980) deals more with organizational and administrative aspects than technical elements. He suggests that the following factors have been present in those communities where the downtown effort has had a "high achievement quotient."

Concern. There must be concern among business leaders, city administrators and the general public about the state of the downtown and its future.

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Optimism and confidence. There must be a deep, underlying belief that downtown is worth the effort it may take to make it the focus of the community again.

Leadership. There must be one or more individuals capable of spearheading revitalization efforts. Dedicated leadership can turn a downtown action plan into reality.

Knowledge. Effort and leadership will not proceed without careful analysis of the facts. The functioning of downtown development is extremely complex. If a downtown action is going to succeed, it must be based on thorough knowledge of all factors involved.

A plan. A successful plan must be both realistic and exciting. Davis notes that the power of a bold, imaginative and dynamic plan is tremendous.

A public partner. Any downtown action plan always requires a partnership of local government agencies and almost always requires county, state and federal government involvement.

The ability to make deals. This is the ability to put it all together. Implementation of many aspects of a revitalization program will involve complex and intricate negotiations that can either falter, or come to a successful conclusion.

Davis (1980) notes that although there may be other requirements in particular instances, these seven are almost always necessary for success.

Robert Craycroft has policy and program suggestions in his *Revitalizing Main Street—Small Town Public Policy* (1982), that fall into three broad areas: concentration of activities in the CBD, upgrading the physical fabric of downtown, and maximum use of local resources.

His approach also emphasizes the importance of public policy. According to Craycroft: "The key ingredient to successful downtown revitalization lies in the dominant public policy. No single decision has critical impact on the health of the downtown, yet in the aggregate, such policy decisions will reshape the town. It remains for those making policy to direct it to a positive end. They must first formulate an image of what the downtown is to become, then establish goals toward that end. These goals become the standard against which all policy is evaluated. Specific policies should be instituted to further the goals set down and no policy should be enacted which is detrimental to their realization. Proposed policies must be carefully examined for long term effects. They must also be coordinated among the various local bodies and with county, state, and federal agencies to insure that none are working at cross purposes. Cooperation between the public and private sectors is also essential to successful revitalization. It is in their common interest to work together—both have a large stake in successful revitalization." (1982, p. 13)

Downtown revitalization concepts

Critical revitalization concepts treated in most of the small town development literature generally include: organization; design; traffic, parking, and safety; land use and economic structures; merchandising and promotion; and public policy.

Organization is noted as a key element in most downtown revitalization programs. The NMSC (1982, p. 36) states: "Organization is of primary importance in any downtown revitalization program. In a shopping mall, controlled management and image, design, maintenance, promotion, and retail mix give tenants a distinct advantage over downtown stores. To compete effectively, downtown needs to move away from a scatter-shot approach and create a coordinated strategy for revitalization."

PROD, Inc. (1975, p. 36-37) suggests a well-defined process of organization that begins with formation of a group to act as catalyst: "This initial group of citizens, which will be referred to in this manual as the Initial Organizing Group (IOG), could act as catalyst for all phases of revitalization of the CBD.

"These initiators of downtown improvement may have the responsibility to identify their city's (or commercial area's) problems and to gather sufficient facts and documentation necessary to convince others to see the problems...The IOG, then, could be the mayor, an interested private citizen, a handful of businessmen from the realms of banking, retail trade, newspapers and utility companies, or a combination of such interests."

Later PROD, Inc. recommends formation of other, more task oriented, groups such as a downtown improvement group, task force committees, and participants from city offices. Suggestions for committee headings include beautification, finance, merchandising, parking, traffic, transit (public transport), publicity, and public relations.

The NMSC (1982) identifies a group of participants, all of which have key roles in the process. They include city government, the downtown development organization, the merchants association, the Chamber of Commerce, local lending institutions, building owners and tenants, the media, preservation organizations, and regional and state government. Each has a significant role to play in the process of revitalization, and involvement of these groups or individuals will increase the chance of program success.

The NMSC (1982 p. 36) also recommends hiring a qualified project manager. "From examining the areas in which a project manager can be involved, it should be apparent that traditional positions such as community development director, Chamber of Commerce executive, and others are no substitute for a project manager. The downtown needs a full-time person who has the capabilities and the willingness to work in a variety of areas. Any activity that affects the prosperity and image of the central business district, whether large or small, is part of the project manager's concern."

Leadership. Estes (1981, p. 12) notes that solid leadership was one of several factors that were instrumental in their town's success. "The almost weekly meetings of the steering committee also contributed to success. Between February 29 and September 30 the committee met either in full or in special groups 29 times. The leadership, sustained enthusiasm, and momentum that was provided by the steering committee members proved to be contagious, and many local citizens who began as detractors became supporters."

Public private partnership. Another important aspect of organization is the critical link between private and public sectors. Banner (1976, p. 432) states that, "While the partnership may work

through informal means, special organizations have been employed for a variety of reasons:

"1) Well understood ground rules are essential in order to avoid the pitfalls that often accompany public/private cooperation.

"2) City center is a well-defined geographic area, with a distinct set of planning and investment needs. Organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce usually represent the city as a whole or as a metropolitan area rather than concentrate on the downtown area or on the city center. Chambers of Commerce also usually contain membership and interests that compete or conflict with city center objectives. Therefore, a separate and special organization concentrates best on downtown.

"3) Downtown business interests require a forum for the discussion of their needs and the development of a program to meet them. The forum can also serve as a voice for the city center program, after it has been prepared.

"4) Government usually lacks the flexibility and personnel with special technical qualifications to represent the investment perspective of the downtown area. Government is also limited by procedures that tend to impede progress. Once public decisions are made, a downtown organization can serve as a spokesperson in support of those public goals. In fact, a downtown organization can provide technical assistance for government and can serve as a convener for different government agencies, a negotiator among them and a sounding board for government proposals."

Public relations. In order to build and maintain support for downtown revitalization a public relations program can be a very effective tool. PROD, Inc. (1975, p. 42) emphasizes the importance of this aspect. "Continued meetings of the full DIG (Downtown Improvement Group) membership may be vital to successful implementation of the plan. These meetings will provide the opportunity for progress reports from committees with a discussion of problems encountered along the way and the opportunity to request whatever additional help may be needed. Continued coverage of progress and events by the news media is an effective tool for motivating workers and maintaining public interest and support."

Reflecting on their experiences in Lincolnton, Georgia, Estes (1981, p. 12) reports: "Three factors contributed greatly to the program's success. Good media coverage was one. The county newspaper, *The Lincoln Journal* printed stories about every plan and activity. At regular intervals the paper printed enthusiastic columns thanking individuals by name and describing what they had done to deserve the thanks. Area radio and TV stations also gave their support, as did other newspapers sold within the region."

Grass roots support. In small town situations, building local or grass roots support for the program is critical to maintaining long term results. Much of the organizational and public relations effort is conducted to create this support. Vicker (1981), quoting Michael L. Ainslie, president of National Trust for Historic Preservation, reports: "It doesn't cost a lot of money to revitalize Main Street. The most successful projects are those financed and implemented by local people." Craycroft (1982, p. 2) also indicates the importance of grass roots support. "It is clear that these negative trends can only be reversed by those having a vested interest in a vital Main Street - its property owners, businesspeople, financial institutions, and political leaders. They have the most to gain if revitalization is successful and the most to lose if it is not."

Again relating the Lincolnton, Georgia experience Estes (1981, p. 12) states: "The people of Lincolnton were the third and most important factor in success. Some committee's ideas that began with blind faith ended with accomplishment only because people gave generously of their time, money, materials and talent."

Design. Most programs recommend that appropriate attention be given to the physical appearance of the downtown. In many it is the keystone of the entire program. The NMSC (1978, p. 1) stresses the importance of downtown appearance. "Many store owners seem to regard appearance as secondary to the more immediate concerns of price, product, and service. Too often the building itself is neglected or mishandled.

"Yet experience shows, time and again, that appearance is important to a healthy downtown. With merchants working together to create an attractive image, downtown as a whole can benefit."

Bramblett (1972 p.15) states: "Most consumers prefer to shop in attractive, safe surroundings that connote the goods available for purchase in the area...CBD's in the smaller cities are often displeasing in many respects. The buildings are often in need of exterior physical renovations. They are also normally cluttered with unattractive signs and billboards. Utility poles and lines frequently line the streets and skies. Trash is commonly found in the streets and sidewalks and in general, the setting usually imparts an undesirable image. When the consumer compares this scene with that of a new shopping center, or mall, it is fairly obvious which ranks more favorably."

There are many approaches to downtown design, and they stress different elements. The NMSC emphasizes restoring architectural character as a key to a successful program. Others feature streetscape, or improvement of the outdoor areas between buildings, to create a pleasant and safe environment. One point that is noted almost unanimously is that each community's approach will vary according to its downtown improvement needs. Some of the recommendations most often cited in the literature are described herein.

Architecture. The buildings themselves are one of the major environmental components that patrons of the downtown area react to, and they can become strong positive elements in establishing the overall character of the space. Most recommendations for architectural design stress the importance of preserving and reinforcing the existing architectural character of the downtown. Bramblett (1973, p. 22) provides a word of caution in this aspect.

"...while revitalization can change the physical character and appearance of the shopping area, communities must be wary of the current trend to 'theme developments.' Theme developments are appropriate for such places as Disneyworld or other areas where the primary goal is amusement. However, each community should reflect its own distinct character and heritage and not try to 'paste on' a false front to emulate Williamsburg or some other theme which is not indigenous to the areas."

Dealing with the same subject Galbreath (1975, p. 22) reports: "Some towns that have little else to offer but a gasoline alley and motel row may

actually need a 'theme'—and more help than that. But for others, among them fifty-six California towns under 50,000 in population, the 'theme' concept may do more harm than good. Not only does this approach to economic revitalization eradicate genuine community character, but also the 'authentic artiface' or theme grows old fast. Kitsch becomes dated quickly. In financial rather than aesthetic terms, an investment may have greater return over the long term if it is made in something with more lasting appeal.

The NMSC is one of the strongest proponents of restoring original character in downtown buildings. The NMSC (1982, p. 51) states: "Because buildings have been altered in a variety of ways, particularly over the past 30 years, removal of the incompatible elements and enhancement of the original ones can be a dramatic way of achieving visible results in Main Street revitalization. Although storefront design is only one element needed to improve economic conditions downtown, it is the most prominent and often the first accomplished."

The NMSC (1982, p.51-52) identifies three approaches to accomplishing this objective.

Restoration is defined as reproducing the appearance of a building exactly the way it looked at a particular moment in time.

Major rehabilitation entails drastic alteration of commercial buildings with major elements removed, storefronts replaced, etc. Major rehabilitation may be required to return a building to a form compatible with the rest of the town. The NMSC suggests reconstruction of a period storefront, or construction of a new, compatible storefront, as alternative approaches.

Conservation rehabilitation is the design treatment that can be applied most often in downtown revitalization programs. Although the term is a new one, the NMSC defines it as simply improving the storefront appearance by minimizing less attractive features and adding simple, inexpensive elements to emphasize positive characteristics.

Other recommendations do not relate solely to remodeling to achieve compatibility with the original architectural character. Some significant areas are noted by Alexander (February 15, 1981, p. 1). "Exterior renovations: front facades and store fronts: The main focus should be on cleaning, repair and remodeling to make them more compatible with the building's original architecture.

"Side and rear elevations: Although not a part of the front facade, these are nevertheless a part of the downtown visual environment and as such should be considered part of its image. Removal of unnecessary signs, the addition or restoration of window openings, repetition of front facade details, cleaning and repair of masonry, and painting with subdued tones are simple ways of beginning.

"Signage: Limit exterior wall signs to business identification and services offered. Blend the signs in with the overall architecture of the building. Consider small attached projecting signs as opposed to free standing signs.

"Awnings: These provide pedestrian protection from sun and rain making it more pleasant to shop downtown. Awnings are also very useful for making plain utilitarian exteriors more attractive, creating a strong visual element, if designed correctly.

"Color guidelines for exterior facades: These should be developed in accordance with building type and use."

The NMSC also offers specific recommendations regarding building maintenance. They note that the condition of the building is a very significant factor in the public's overall impression of the CBD. The NMSC (1982, p. 68) notes that, "...superficial paint-up fix-up campaigns produce only 'skin deep' results. If we are to revitalize our downtown areas with common sense and care, we must maintain what we have done."

Streetscape. The creation of an environment that is pleasant, safe and inviting is the prime objective of the streetscape as a component in downtown revitalization. Paumier (1982, p. 76) notes: "the central business district must be a 'people place' an economic and social center of gravity. Downtown can offer places to work, socialize, and shop in a vital mix that no shopping center can match."

There are many elements that can be incorporated to create such an environment. Alexander (February 15, 1981, p. 2) lists several of the more commonly used elements and notes their importance.

"Sidewalk widths and materials: Sidewalks should be widened, repaved and freed from obstructions—if street traffic is adequately handled. This will encourage more casual walking, window shopping and exploration of downtown. Repaving provides a smooth unbroken surface for walking. Brick or a less expensive paver adds warmth and interest to the CBD and distinguishes it from the suburban shopping center.

"Crosswalks: The provision or absence of these are an indicator of the degree of concern for the pedestrian. Necessary are clearly but attractively marked crosswalks, unhurried crossing times, provision of ramps for the handicapped and the removal of all conflicting obstructions.

"Street widths: Whenever possible street widths should be narrowed along Main Street and adjacent downtown streets. This can be done by the elimination of surplus traffic lanes (if any) and, if no other solution is possible, by the transfer of parking from on-street to off-street lots.

"Plantings: Street shade trees enhance downtown in many ways. They add a living, soft flavor to the otherwise hard, built-up environment. A row of trees is also a strong design element which can unite the street's varied architecture. They also provide cooling shade for pedestrians in the summer. When choosing trees, only those compatible with a street environment should be considered.

"Street furniture/utilities: Benches, bus shelters, planters, kiosks, traffic controls and signs, trash cans, phone booths, parking meters, lighting, etc. should blend into the dominant architecture, not clutter the street. Better lighting, sign location and mounting by replacement with units that are better scaled, less obstrusive and without overhead wiring are a first step. The 'jumble' of overhead utility wires is particularly distracting from the image downtown should promote. Expensive burial of the wires would probably be feasible only with new development or a full-scale renovation of streets and sidewalks. Relocation of utility wires to rear alleys or easements, or the judicious use of shade trees can screen the wires."

Traffic, parking, and safety. Traffic circulation and parking are elements that are very critical in downtown revitalization programs. Because of existing space limitations and external constraints, they are often very difficult to deal with effectively. Bramblett (1973, p. 32) recognizes several downtown traffic and parking problems.

"The conflict of pedestrian and vehicular traffic creates an undesirable

situation where the pedestrian is always in danger of being hit by a vehicle. Many shopping centers have overcome this problem by the creation of pedestrian malls where the shopper can circulate freely without the danger created by the presence of the automobile in motion.

"Lack of adequate parking is perhaps the most frequent complaint voiced by both the customer and the merchant. Frequently existing opportunities to create additional parking off-street have been overlooked. In addition, merchants sometimes find that parking spaces in front of their store are filled permanently by the automobiles of their own employees which forces the customer to seek parking elsewhere. Regarding off-street parking which does exist, it is usually an unpaved lot with unmarked spaces. This means that the space is inefficiently used and does not accommodate the number of cars that it could if spaces and traffic lanes were marked for the convenience of the shopper. Also, the full utilization of an unpaved parking area is limited during bad weather."

Downtown areas are faced with a major disadvantage over new shopping malls with ample parking spaces. In many cases, whether there is adequate parking available or not, downtown shopping areas have difficulty shedding the reputation that traffic and parking are a problem. The NMSC (1982, p. 48) recommends development of a parking program.

"Finally, promotion of a parking program is needed to attract people downtown. Businesspeople should jointly advertise the number of spaces available, location of lots and any special programs such as park-shop or permit parking. In addition, the city should develop a consistent, well-designed system of signs directing motorists to parking."

Land use and economic structure. An appropriate mix of land uses in the downtown, including variety in the types of businesses, is critical to maintaining or regaining vitality in the town center. There are several areas noted by the NMSC (1982, p.88) that are important.

"Healthy cities and towns of any size have four essential elements present: adequate housing, availability of necessary goods and services, recreation, and industry that brings with it much needed outside capital. All of these elements are interdependent. If one or more is missing, people will have to go outside of town, taking their dollars with them, to find it. For our purposes, the most exciting, succesful downtown areas have at least three of the elements in close proximity to the central business district."

Specifically the NMSC (1982, p. 88) notes: "Any downtown revitalization effort should analyze the surrounding housing stock and seek ways to improve it. It bears direct relationship to the downtown's economic stability." The NMSC also notes that a cost effective method to create new housing is to convert upper floors into living accomodations. This also means that more people will remain downtown to patronize the businesses.

Availability of goods and services is another important element as it becomes more obvious that in both large and small downtowns, a mixed-use approach to providing goods and services, as opposed to the traditional retail role of the downtown, is a very positive step. Alexander (June 15, 1981, p. 4) states that, "Mixed-use is the buzz phrase that describes one of the ways to hold people downtown longer, and to build up critical levels of people-density in downtown. Mixed-use, which simply means building multiple people facilities into a single entity, is a notion which applies to a new development, to redevelopment within a single structure, and with equal force, to whole downtowns."

The NMSC suggests that office and professional services can provide an additional dimension to the downtown (1982, p. 88). "Enclosed shopping malls have not traditionally included dry cleaners, shoe repair shops, appliance shops and barbers because the center's requirements for rent income are much higher than that of downtown landlords. These necessary services, in addition to legal, medical and dental offices, insurance and utility offices, banks, libraries and government offices are an asset to downtown because they reinforce the retail traffic."

Entertainment and recreation in the downtown is another important aspect of the mixed-use concept. Many downtown areas place added significance on this aspect of downtown development. The NMSC (1982, p.89) states: "People going downtown should not simply find retail operations: they should find a mixture of images and activities that enhance the experience there. If they enjoy themselves, the image of the entire downtown is reinforced by association. Rebuilding a positive image downtown will require showmanship in addition to building and sales tax figures."

Alexander (June 145, 1981, p.3) explains the basis of this concept. "The magic of holding people downtown longer is becoming appreciated. It is one of the real keys to downtown productivity and success. This concept will be the foundation of many downtown development plans, business plans and marketing-promotional programs. It is simple: if people come downtown, and then can be kept in the downtown longer, they'll do more things, buy more things, eat more, and broadly speaking, energize downtown more."

Other aspects of land use relevant in downtown situations deal with the physical arrangement. Most authors who have addressed this topic recommend a compact downtown that allows patrons to move easily and quickly between businesses. There are other recommendations that relate to specific arrangements, most notably Bramblett's cluster approach (1973, p. 43).

"Today an equally correct but more germane view of retailing is to consider clusters of individual stores as institutions of retailing. This broader view is derived from the growing importance of shopping centers and it emphasizes the greater extent of planning which focuses on clusters of stores rather than expressly on the individual stores that make up the cluster. The 'principle of aggregate convenience' suggested by Professor Reamis Cox underlines the need for formally considering retail clusters. The principle states that the customer is best served when the stores to which he goes are arranged into clusters that help to minimize the aggregate effort he spends in obtaining the benefits he needs to maintain or extend his style of life. In a phrase, 'one stop shopping.'"

Clearly, given the physical constraints of many existing downtown areas, the cluster concept must be modified to adapt to individual situations, but the underlying principles are of value in land use decisions.

Merchandising and promotion have long been functions of business that merchants are aware of, and some aspects can be implemented to help improve the vitality of downtown

districts if sufficient organization exists. Organizing merchants, and encouraging them to work together, has been a challenge to those dedicated to downtown action. The NMSC (1982, p. 45) states: "A downtown organization requires active involvement and cooperation as well as some sort of mandatory support system for its budget. With funds in place a staff can be hired to carry out the three primary activities performed in a mall: administration, business recruitment, and promotion. This sort of organized management is difficult for the traditionally independent downtown business operator, but it is necessary. Emulating the integrated organizational style of the shopping mall is the only way downtown merchants can improve their ability to compete."

To help strengthen the downtown, a number of areas are suggested in the literature for merchants who are organized and working together . Pollman (1980, p. 18) states: "One course of action could involve a cooperative effort among retailers to practice a greater degree of market segmentation. For example, instead of having two menswear stores carrying essentially the same items, one store could concentrate on clothes for older men and the other on clothes for younger men. Each store might then be able to bring as great a variety to their particular market area as that which would be found in the large shopping centers of the metropolitan community."

Other actions suggested include a regular promotional program, with a budget and a schedule of year-round activities in which the entire downtown area can participate. The NMSC (1982, p. 72) suggests: "With a budget in hand, a program schedule and priorities can be laid out. It is important to set reasonable goals designed to have maximum impact. A schedule should be established at the beginning of the year with agreed-upon dates for the coming years activities."

The NMSC also recommends promoting an image of the downtown that reinforces an identifiable character of the area. Special events held downtown attract people who may not normally go there. In addition to adequate supply of goods and services at competitive prices, and promotion, making the visit enjoyable is an important part of the formula for bringing people downtown and keeping them there. Wilcox (1980, p. 377, p. 392) states: "For the last 30 years, renewal and revitalization have been the process of re-creating attractive shopping and visitation experiences in all sizes of downtown space. In only a few examples, however, are there committed track records of integrated and coordinated regular annual promotional, entertainment, and visitor generation programs...A part of the necessity to pay greater attention to the need for a downtown-attractions management program is the fact that most downtowns are undergoing a conversion of uses and, in the main, losing their former advantage as the prime retail area. Commercial entertainment has become a viable economic activity based upon the stabilization, retention and growth of additional office daytime population...Downtown-attractions management is as important as the physical results of the revitalization program itself. Downtown-attractions management simply requires the spirit and the organizing capacity to establish a program and the commitment to an effort for the very long term."

Alexander explains that building enjoyment into downtown will improve the financial success of the merchants. Along the same lines as the mixed-use concept, he notes that fun can be a boost to downtown (June 15, 1981, p. 3). "The same basic reasons underlie the importance of building more fun into downtown. Fun is fun. People like it. They come downtown for it and they come back if they find it. Historically, downtowns tended to be all business, no fun. Merchants, property owners and bankers were grimly serious people about money, forgetting that if people don't enjoy downtown they may never come back. That is why the best and most sophisticated merchants, designers and developers are now emphasizing the fun elements in planning and design."

De Vito (1980, p. 198) points out that in his view, retailing is indeed the answer to downtown's problems and the key to the future. He states: "Retailing has a life and vigor night and day, seven days a week. It has a universal appeal. Everyone shops - executives, workers, students, and tourists. Retailing relates to every other function in the city. It stimulates and strengthens other businesses such as banking, accounting, publishing, or insurance. It provides a very broad job base, including opportunities for low-skill and part-time employment. And when developed the best that it can be, it is a happy, joyous, colorful festival of activities that brings forth, more than any other function, the life and spirit of the city."

Public policy. It is crucial to reinforce the efforts of a downtown organization with appropriate public policy. Policy can encourage growth and development of a healthy downtown and discourage actions that weaken it. Craycroft (1982, p. 55): "Clearly, public policy can have an impact on downtown revitalization; the small town does not have the capability to guide its own future.

"Most policy decisions made in the past have been based solely on efficiency, convenience, and economics. These cannot be the only criteria; they are not measures of the quality of life. Ideas about the quality of life may be subjective and difficult to measure, but they are real and important. They must be a factor in the decision-making process. If those making public policy in a small town are serious about restoring it as a good place to live they must establish new priorities and redirect public policy."

Craycroft recommends policy be developed in a number of areas to strengthen the downtown, including resource concentration, adaptive use, historic districts, zoning regulation, development incentives, strip development, good housekeeping, storefront revitalization, sign control, customer parking, public improvements, civic space, tree protection, downtown organization, modern merchandising, community volunteers, and identity celebration.

He also notes that there are many other areas in which policy can be developed. For each community, depending on current needs and resources, some policies will obviously be more important than others.

Zoning is a tool used to implement policy and to developers, merchants and others involved, represents policy in action. Zoning ordinances should be established to reflect the policies. According to Borut (1979, p. 4) zoning can be used effectively to assist in downtown revitalization.

"Zoning is seen by the development community as an often abused power of local government. But just as it has been used as a tool to prevent development, so too can it be used to encourage it. Many projects, especially in the heart of older downtowns, require special zoning to allow for a

mixture of uses. By combining office and retail with residential in a mixed-use project, for example, it is often possible to generate the right cash flow to make an otherwise uneconomic project feasible. Being receptive to the needs of specific types of projects, a local government through its zoning can often encourage projects that would otherwise not have gotten off the drawing board."

Public-private partnerships become very important in making the policy component of a program work effectively, and as noted previously, this can be instrumental in establishing policy priorities and in program implementation.

Small town situations

Many of the concepts presented in this paper have originated in larger communities. Although the concepts may be applicable, there are some significant differences between small towns and larger communities which should be recognized when implementation in small towns is considered.

Alexander (August 1, 1982, p. 3) lists a number of practical tactics for small town downtown revitalization.

"Stop dreaming about finding a major developer to come in, plan a project, design it, finance it, build it, rent it and operate it. There are few developers around with major capabilities and, realistically, they are not looking for smaller town opportunities. Their cost structure makes it difficult or impossible for them to undertake small projects.

"Instead, identify and work with local and regional developers. They know the area, the markets, the local financial channels, the prospective tenants. Being nearby they can work at a lower cost.

"It is essential to do very careful market and economic analyses of any project: converting an old department to shops, building a downtown office building and even constructing public projects like parking. In the smaller, local economies there is little room for error. A big weakness in many small downtown planning and project proposals is their inadequate, unprofessional market, financial and economic research and analysis.

"Following from the previous point, it is necessary to get the projects in scale. They must fit economically. At the same time they must fit physically in the scale of the downtown. While thinking big is good, thinking too big, which is even more common, is fatal.

"Do not imitate heavily publicized ideas from big downtowns. Many of these ideas can't be shrunk to fit small downtowns. Also many of them are hyped by public relations techniques and are much less successful than you think. At the same time, be sure to be well informed about big city projects, development techniques, etc. In many cases they can be adapted, modified and cut to fit smaller towns. The key is thorough, intelligent analysis of how to cut them down without emasculating them. It is an art.

"Tap local resources in design, planning, finance, construction, etc. Local people have a wealth of know-how and of local understanding. Many small downtowns are deeply involved with citizen action, but fail to utilize the trained skills of local business, government and financial people.

"Investigate and use local concepts, themes and trends. Local variations on markets, materials of construction, historic themes, specialized tastes and more, all exist. They can add to the success potential of projects by augmenting appeals and influencing markets just as they can insure a better thematic and design fit into the downtown community.

"Finally, always stress fit. This means economic fit, of course. It means physical, conceptual and human fit as well. With the tight situation in most smaller downtowns the concept of accurate fit is of prime importance."

The elements mentioned above point out a number of differences in the approach suited to small towns as opposed to larger communities, and provide some direction in undertaking these projects. Michel (1980, p. 11) states, "The very elements that combine to make small towns desirable places to live and work are the same ones that can blend or block a town's revitalization. Familiarity, a strong sense of community, personalized town government and civic independence often create a situation in which an objective viewpoint of a community's problems and possible solution is nearly impossible. Too often residents are unaware of the potential and value of their townspeople."

Conclusion

Downtown revitalization programs have been initiated in many cities and towns in the west in an effort to restore confidence and vitality to the town center. Many of these programs have ultimately yielded renewed interest in the downtown. Implementation is, however, a significant problem in many small communities. Although a number of small towns have undertaken and implemented successful downtown revitalization programs, a great many more have initiated programs that did not proceed beyond concept planning. Many reasons exist for this lack of implementation, most of which are related to lack of funds, or the failure of those involved to recognize the significant differences between a small town and the larger communities where most downtown revitalization techniques originate. Although some of the same approaches may be relevant, and have indeed contributed to the rejuvenation of downtown, it is important to recognize that small towns are different and warrant an alternative perspective.

Many of the more realistic approaches to small town downtown revitalization, stress an incremental approach to program implementation, and grass roots support toward that end. Craycroft (1982, p. 2) maintains:

"It is clear that these negative trends can be reversed only by those having a vested interest in a vital main street—its property owners, businessmen, financial institutions, and political leaders. They have the most to gain if revitalization is successful and the most to lose if it is not. Reversing decades of decline will require a considerable investment of time, energy, and money. It will also require open minds, a belief in the possible and a continuing commitment. The results will not be immediate; Main Street's problems have evolved over a long period of time and its revitalization can only be incremental."

Maloy (1982 p. 18) quoting Scott Gurloff of NMSC, states: "'Local communities always want to tackle the hardest thing first,' he says. 'They want to get a new department store downtown, for example. We'll tell them to forget it, that it's not going to happen.' Instead experts urge simple, low cost projects be given first priority. Splashy new graphics, spruced up store windows, attractive brochures with a directory of downtown merchants."

An incremental approach needs to be undertaken with careful consideration. An important factor for success is public awareness that change, or improvement, is occurring and some immediate success is apparent. Paumier (1982, p. 79) reports: "Rapid completion of short term tasks builds confidence and generates interest in long term projects, such as attracting new businesses and residents." This suggests that the initial actions must be of manageable scale, but significant and successful, so the community perceives that improvement or change is occurring and so that merchants do not become discouraged and disillusioned with the process.

All of the various aspects of downtown revitalization discussed in this paper are important and need to be addressed in some manner. Costly improvements or major programs need not be initiated, but awareness of the range of relevant issues and their effect is imperative to maintaining a vital main street.

"The success of the program will depend on the extent to which the municipality and the community at large can perceive their interests in common and can integrate all components—from zoning and municipal works to beautification and promotion—into a unified approach to the rejuvenation of the downtown core and its surrounding area." (British Columbia Ministry of Municipal Affairs 1980, p. 7)

Promotion and marketing strategies, public policy and zoning, as well as physical improvements and beautification are projects applicable to small towns and larger communities alike, but the implementation needs to vary to accommodate differences.

One of the most important things for the development of the central business district is that the officials, merchants, and planners receive adequate encouragement and assistance to make informed decisions when they assign priorties to the steps under consideration in their revitalization program, so that they begin with an effective first step, that can be built upon incrementally, and restore confidence in the downtown commercial area without an initial major expenditure that may preclude any further work. Ronald Young, mayor of Frederick, Maryland, (1982, p. 78) cautions, "Communities that have only a general idea of what they want, can expend money and time and yet miss the mark because they fail to harness available expertise. By studying what has been done elsewhere, what has been successful, and by using consultant assistance, Frederick has found fresh solutions and has avoided others' mistakes."

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